

# National talking points

## Document revision history

Version	Date issued	Amendment details	
		Section(s)	Details
1.0	30 Nov 2017	All	New document developed by Plant Health Australia in collaboration with Biosecurity Incident National Communication Network Chair/Secretariat. Endorsed by Parties November 2017.
1.1	30 Nov 2018	Section 3.3	Minor update to reference inclusion of relevant situational information, response strategy details and information on counselling and support services available. Endorsed by Parties November 2018.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) Parties on the purpose, use and process for the development of national talking points during a response to an Incident<sup>1</sup> under the EPPRD. Guidance is also provided on the type of information which may be included in national talking points, with further detail on potential content included in the *National talking points* template<sup>2</sup>.

The process for development and approval of national talking points that is described in this document is consistent with that described in PLANTPLAN.

Capitalised terms (excluding names) used in this document are a reference to the defined terms in clause 1.1 of the EPPRD.

<sup>1</sup> Where the term 'Incident' is used throughout this document, it refers to the occurrence of a confirmed or reasonably held suspicion of an EPP or of an unclassified Plant Pest which is reasonably believed to be an EPP (not including a Plant Pest investigation where the provisional finding or diagnosis is that the Plant Pest is established).

<sup>2</sup> Available from [planthealthaustralia.com.au/plantplan](http://planthealthaustralia.com.au/plantplan)

## 2. Purpose of national talking points

The purpose of national talking points is to provide nationally agreed and timely information about an Incident, that can be used by Affected Parties both proactively and reactively when communicating to stakeholders and the wider public. Approved national talking points form the basis of the information used when developing media releases, website content as well as in other public information materials and for industry/community engagement activities. Information about an Incident that is not contained in the national talking points should not be communicated to those outside of the Affected Parties, unless it has been agreed by those Affected Parties.

When a suspect Emergency Plant Pest (EPP) is detected, there is often a need for Affected Parties to provide information to stakeholders and the wider public quickly and effectively. This can include important information about how to identify and report suspected EPPs, advise the status of the Incident and how stakeholders and/or the wider public may be impacted. As there are often a number of Affected Parties communicating to their members through a variety of mechanisms, it is critical that the messages are nationally consistent and where possible coordinated to be released at the same time. The development of national talking points addresses these needs by providing a set of consistent and nationally agreed key messages. These messages can be used by media spokespeople and to develop other public content such as newsletters, website content and to address face-to-face meetings.

The specific content and level of detail in the national talking points will be driven by the specific information the Affected Parties need to communicate to stakeholders and the wider public. This may vary from one Incident to another and will be dependent on the nature, extent and stage of the specific Incident.

National talking points are typically developed for active Incidents that are under consideration by the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP)/ National Management Group (NMG) or for which an agreed Response Plan is in place. They are also developed to accompany the Biannual Report from the CCEPP to the NMG for Incidents in which the recommendation is for no further action under the EPPRD (as they either do not relate to an EPP or relate to an EPP that is not feasible to eradicate). This enables Affected Parties to communicate consistent messages about the outcome of consideration of these Incidents under the EPPRD, for which government and industry may then develop awareness material to inform affected growers.

## 3. Process for development of national talking points

The development and approval of national talking points must be managed quickly to meet tight media deadlines and enable key awareness messages to be communicated to stakeholders and/or the wider public, as early as possible following the detection of an EPP.

### 3.1 Drafting national talking points

Any Affected Party can initiate the development of national talking points at any time following the notification of an Incident to the CCEPP. The general practice is for the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (through the Biosecurity Incident National Communication Network (NCN) Chair/Secretariat) and Lead Agency to jointly develop the draft national talking points, either prior to or immediately following a CCEPP teleconference being convened. Where national talking points are not developed by the NCN

Secretariat/Lead Agency, an Affected Party may develop the initial draft talking points or request (through the CCEPP) that they be developed and put forward key messages they would like to be included.

All Affected Parties have a role in providing input into the development of national talking points. Key points to be covered in the talking points should be raised by CCEPP members, ideally prior to the initial draft being developed. If a CCEPP meeting has been scheduled, key points for inclusion should be raised prior to or at the CCEPP meeting to ensure specific information is included to support effective communication with stakeholders. A standing agenda item for industry communication is included in CCEPP meetings and provides industry with the opportunity to discuss industry specific communications and propose key messages that they would like to share with their members and should therefore be included in the draft national talking points.

Once developed the draft national talking points are distributed by the NCN Secretariat for immediate comment by NCN members and Affected Industry Parties. Industry Parties should nominate their relevant communication manager (where available) who will receive the talking points and coordinate their organisation's input or feedback. Where a communication manager is not available, the CCEPP representative for the Industry Party will be included on the NCN distribution list and may provide input to the talking points. A cut off time for feedback will be stated when the talking points are emailed. In most cases turnaround time is short due to the urgent need to get information out to growers and affected stakeholders.

Once the NCN member receives the talking points they are expected to consult the CCEPP member to discuss any required changes or feedback.

Once the feedback is received by the NCN Secretariat, the relevant changes are incorporated. It should be noted that not all changes are made or accepted. This is because, on occasions, feedback is conflicting, inconsistent, or the change has already been addressed by another Party. The NCN Secretariat uses best judgement to collate the changes, and to ensure that the information is correct and written in an appropriate style for the intended audiences. The NCN Secretariat will seek technical advice where necessary.

### **3.2 Approval of national talking points**

Following the incorporation of feedback, the draft is sent to the Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer (ACPPO) for approval. Once approved by the ACPPO, the NCN Secretariat distributes the national talking points back out to the NCN and Affected Industry Parties. The CCEPP Secretariat also provides a final copy to all CCEPP members for their use.

### **3.3 Content of national talking points**

The content and level of detail that is covered in national talking points will depend on the nature, extent and stage of the Incident as well as the specific information that Affected Parties need to communicate. The content can be as detailed as required to meet the communication needs of the Affected Parties. Detailed information on the potential content including standard headings and text is provided in the *National talking points* template ([planthealthaustralia.com.au/plantplan](http://planthealthaustralia.com.au/plantplan)). In general terms, national talking points will typically cover the following:

- Up to date information on the current situation at the level of detail required to support stakeholder engagement.

- The actions being taken in response to the detection, including information on the underpinning response strategy being implemented. If required, a summary of data may be included to provide an indication of the scale of the response, effort involved in responding to the Incident and progress being made on specific activities (e.g. data on the number of samples collected, traces completed, surveillance events conducted, plants destroyed etc). This information will evolve as the response progresses through updated versions of the national talking points.
- Information to help growers and the public identify, prevent the spread of, and report the pest or disease.
- Any trade and market access restrictions.
- Information on counselling and support services provided by the relevant jurisdiction and nationally (if relevant).
- Standard information about the CCEPP, NMG and EPPRD. Where to get further information.

While talking points should contain specific information about the Incident, they should not contain information that would identify an individual or property, for example, the property name or street address. Whilst the suburb or region in which the detection(s) have been made is typically specified, consideration should be given to whether this is appropriate, as for some industries this level of detail may risk the identity of property owner(s) being revealed. Talking points may convey key decisions on the response course of action that have been agreed by the CCEPP or NMG; however, information regarding individual opinions or details of the discussions held by Affected Parties must not be included.

Parties should remember that national talking points need to be written in a conversational, non-bureaucratic tone. Sentences should be kept short and must be free of acronyms, technical jargon and words in brackets. Common names for pests or diseases should be used, with the scientific name also noted within the document. Long terms used throughout the document can be shortened after being used once. For example, 'Cucumber Green Mottle Mosaic Virus', can be referred to as 'the virus'.

It is important not to use numerous website addresses and phone numbers. In most cases the Outbreak website ([outbreak.gov.au](http://outbreak.gov.au)) should be used. This website is a portal for people to also access individual state/territory or industry website information. If using a state/territory website the web address should have a short, direct URL for example, [dpi.nsw.gov.au/xvirus](http://dpi.nsw.gov.au/xvirus).

The Emergency Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881, should always be used in national talking points, regardless of whether the Lead Agency for the response has a separate number.

### 3.4 Updating national talking points

National talking points should be updated regularly so that content remains current and relevant. At a minimum, they should be updated when there are major changes to the situation or when key milestones of a response are achieved (for example completion of eradication activities). National talking points should be regularly updated for Incidents in which an agreed Response Plan is in place, even if there are no major changes to the situation or response activities. At a minimum, they should be updated annually to reflect that the response activities are ongoing and no triggers for review of the Response Plan have been met.

The process for updating national talking points is the same as when they are first developed. Any Affected Party may request that the talking points are updated, and identify the content that needs to be changed/added. The NCN Secretariat will typically then update the content and circulate to the NCN and Affected Industry Party contacts for review. After being updated and approved by the ACPPO, the national talking points are then circulated to the CCEPP for their use.

#### 4. Use of national talking points

Approved national talking points can be used by Affected Parties to develop their own communication content/products including EPP industry alerts<sup>3</sup>, fact sheets, website and newsletter content. However, the national talking points should not be distributed in their current form as a document of the CCEPP.

The information contained in national talking points can also be used proactively by media spokespeople (e.g. during interviews) or to guide Parties on key messages that can be communicated during industry/community engagement activities (e.g. grower/industry meetings). In some cases, information about an Incident may not be released publicly, but national talking points are developed as a preparedness measure in case, for some reason, the Incident creates public or media interest.

If information needs to be communicated outside of the Affected Parties, it must be restricted to key messages contained within agreed national talking points.

National talking points are also used by the NMG or CCEPP to develop communiques during the course of an Incident.

Where possible, communications should be coordinated between Affected Parties to enable consistent public messaging. Media releases, for example, should be shared with all Affected Parties prior to release so that they can be coordinated as much as possible. For consistency of messaging, communications with the media will be restricted to the delegated media contacts within Affected Parties.

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<sup>3</sup> An EPP alert template is available as a supporting document to PLANTPLAN [planthealthaustralia.com.au/plantplan](http://planthealthaustralia.com.au/plantplan)